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ABSTRACT

An effective and almost cost-free approach to the identification and amelioration of critical needs and problems of pupils, an approach developed and tested by the Consortium of Laboratory Schools of the Academic Affairs Conference of Midwestern Universities, is designed to help teachers identify through a special survey instrument the needs and problems which their pupils may have to an unusual degree, and encourage teachers to develop remedial and intervention strategies and techniques which they can apply in their own classrooms. Thus far four promising intervention procedures which teachers may select have been studied. They are: (1) Teacher(s) work intensively with a single child. (2) Teacher(s) work intensively with small groups of children with similar needs. (3) Teacher(s) work cooperatively with parent(s) to resolve problems of their son or daughter. (4) Marshalling peer support to aid the pupils; pupils interact in discussions. Preliminary data based on the results from a random group of problems dealt with by these approaches indicated approximately two-thirds of the pupils can be expected to show some improvement. Needs and concerns are felt to be much broader than reading, writing and arithmetic; however, personal problems of pupils, such as being rejected by one's peers, being unhappy in school or having peer work and study skills, have a direct bearing on the successful mastery of academic skills. (Author/JM)

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A Systematic-Individualized Approach to Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Students

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"An effective and almost cost-free approach" to the identification and amelioration of critical needs and problems of pupils promises to save many youth from being cast on the educational scrap heap. The approach developed and tested by the Consortium of Laboratory Schools of the Academic Affairs Conference of Midwestern Universities is designed to:

1. help teachers identify through a special survey instrument the needs and problems which their pupils may have to an unusual degree

and

2. encourage teachers to develop remedial and intervention strategies and techniques which they can apply in their own classrooms

Needs and concerns are felt to be much broader than "reading, writing, and arithmetic"; however, personal problems of pupils, such as being rejected by one's peers, being unhappy in school or having poor work and study skills, have a direct bearing on the successful mastery of academic skills.

The approach tends to be effective due to a grassroots approach, high teacher involvement, and its focus on individual pupils with problems. It does not emphasize packaged materials and instructional gadetry. Thus far four promising intervention procedures which teachers may select have been studied. They are:

Approach I	Teacher(s) work intensively with a single child.
Approach II	Teacher(s) work intensively with small groups of children with similar needs.
Approach III	Teacher(s) work cooperatively with parent(s) to resolve problems of their son or daughter.
Approach IV	Marshalling peer support to aid the pupils; pupils interact in discussions.

Preliminary data based on the results from a random group of problems dealt with by these approaches indicated approximately 2/3 of the pupils can be expected to show some improvement.

Additional information may be obtained from the following cooperating consortium laboratory schools at Illinois State University, Normal; Western Illinois University, Macomb; Indiana State University, Terre Haute; and Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

The project was funded in part by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

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February, 1975

[1]MEETING THE NEEDS OF DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

A Pilot Project by Consortium of Laboratory Schools
of
Academic Affairs Conference of Mid-Western Universities

I. Introductory Statements--Am defining atypical youth as any youth who may have a problem to an unusual degree and which will seriously impede growth and development as an individual. This project is a systematic procedure for identifying and meeting the needs of students. Because it is felt that the hundreds of "little decisions" which teachers must make daily about children are more important than the relatively few "big decisions", the project is focused on the development of working professional competencies of classroom teachers. It is not a cookbook solution because when unique teachers work with unique individuals, pat solutions do not exist--except for the unsophisticated or self-purposing educational hustlers.[2] But we feel that it is a useful approach in terms of guiding principles.

The project developed in an education milieu which should give educators cold chills. I cite a few statistics and developments which I believe calls for both schools and homes to re-examine their attitudes and life styles. These data underscore the importance of developing better and more effective ways of meeting the personal, social, and academic problems of those youth who attend our schools. They are:

A. The 1973 findings of the Gilbert Youth Corp. reported in NASSP publication, The Mood of American Youth - 1974. Interviews with randomly selected high school students revealed that:

--Over 50% claim that the administrators of their high schools do not understand their problems.
--Almost a third report that their teachers do not take an interest in students, don't care, and don't listen.
--Over 2/5 say they would be happier living away from their families.

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[1] Alternate title might be "Raising the Achievement Level of Students."

[2] You will recall H.L. Menken's statement, "Every difficult and complex problem has a solution which is simple, direct, easy, and 'false'." Whitehead said it more simply, "Seek simplicity and then distrust it."

B. A report by the Cook County School Superintendent's Office concerning 1973 dropouts from suburban and Chicago high schools indicated that the major reason for dropping out was due to "a lack of interest." For example,
--26% of the over 5,000 dropouts from suburban high schools and 45% of the 21,400 Chicago high school dropouts gave "lack of interest" as their reason for leaving school.
--19% of the Chicago dropouts gave no reason at all.

C. U.S. Commissioner, Terrel Bell, reported in a January, 1975 Washington D.C. conference that "only 56% of adult Americans are able to read newspaper help wanted ads well enough to see if they are qualified."

D. Approximately 40% of the children who enter never finish our public schools.

E. Study of the widespread drug abuse and misuse by youth indicates that "the underlying reasons for drug involvement have to do with personality factors: loneliness, alienation, friendships, poor self image, and search for identity." /Public Affairs Pamphlet 515, page 11, Drugs--Use, Misuse, and Abuse, 1975.

F. The concept of readiness tells us that pupils are not ready to satisfy cognitive needs until and only after a host of more pressing social and emotional concerns have been met. Maslow along with other psychologists point out the significance of the hierarchy of the needs concept in the teaching-learning process.

G. The trend toward "mainstreaming" increasing numbers of atypical pupils underscores the need for individualizing instructional programs.

It should be compellingly clear that the data cited above call for schools (and homes) to re-examine their attitudes and life styles. The schools of the future must be staffed with sensitive, concerned, and humanistic teachers. It calls for a rehumanization of education with stress on both individuality and individualization.

II. Description of Project, "Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Students"

This approach to meeting the needs of students was developed and tested in the 1973-74 school year by the Consortium of Laboratory Schools of the Academic Affairs Conference of Mid-Western Universities. Approximately 2,000 students (kdg.-12th grd.) and 240 teachers were involved in four laboratory schools. It was financed in part by the Illinois Board of Higher Education from funds earmarked to encourage inter-

institutional cooperation in higher education.

A. Purpose

The purpose was to develop a systematic approach which would:

1. Help a school staff identify the critical needs of their students and
2. Encourage and help schools to build school programs responsive to the diversified and identified needs of their pupils.

B. Procedures of Program

The procedures of the program are relatively simple. They tend to be effective due to a grass-roots approach and high teacher involvement. They are briefly stated as follows:

1. Pupil needs are identified by teachers through using the "Special Needs Survey Instrument."
2. Forms which are provided are used to tabulate, distribute, and analyze data which were collected through use of the "Survey Instrument." (attached)
3. Faculty members study data for pupils they know or teach, and then create situations (teaching strategies, curricular changes, attitudinal changes, environmental changes) designed to meet the recognized needs of their pupil(s).
4. Teachers evaluate the progress made by pupils, changes in the school program, and changes in the relationships within the school.

NOTE: It is the evaluation (point 4 above) phase which is usually omitted by educators when they try innovative practices and methods. Thus, they have no solid basis for determining the value of the new practice. Neglecting the evaluation component encourages one to argue the merits of a new procedure from an emotional and quicksand base.

C. Promising Approaches and Intervention strategies used in Meeting Critical Needs of Pupils

One of the appealing features of the SNAP program is that teachers develop and devise their own strategies and ideas for alleviating the pressing problems which they have identified. Thus teachers develop a high degree of ownership in their procedures; they have the feeling that they are "in business for themselves." This does not mean, however, that teachers would not avail themselves of all available resources--(printed materials, specialized personnel, social and/or community agencies).

D. Strategies Most Frequently used by the Consortium of Laboratory School Teachers include:

1. One or more teachers work intensively with one or two pupils with problems to an unusual degree. Intervention activities selected will, of course, depend on the specific problem(s) and pupil(s) involved.
2. One or more teachers work with a cluster (2 to 5) of pupils with the same or similar problems.
3. Teacher(s) work cooperatively with a parent(s) to resolve the problem(s) of their son or daughter.
4. Conduct open discussion groups involving pupils and a trained teacher leader whereby participants may explore ideas which may be helpful to those who have serious problems.

E. A wide variety of intervention techniques were tried by teachers as they attempted to alleviate pressing problems of pupils. Many of the action ideas and techniques are equally useful for more than one of the strategies listed above and one or more techniques may be used in a particular case. A few of the more successful techniques follow:

--Use greater care in making assignments to individual pupils.
--Use of short-term goals in which pupil will succeed.
--Individualize instruction on basis of discovered interests and skills needed, i.e., adjusting time spent in certain curricular areas.
--Seek new or different materials for selected pupil(s).
--Involve pupils in discussion concerning solutions for selected problems.
--Use case study techniques, keep log of significant behavior changes.
--team up with other teachers to present united front.
--Create situations where pupil can contribute significantly.
--Use positive reinforcements, writing notes of commendation to pupil(s); congratulate him.
--Accord pupil more attention; show interest in him; inquire about his outside concerns.
--Stress strengths; provide praise wherever possible.
--Refrain from actions which might embarrass pupil.
--Application of various behavior modification techniques or contingency management.
--Be friendly, show sincere interest.
--Be consistent in discipline.
--Listen sympathetically; listen and listen some more.
--Discover pupils' interest and/or hobby; build on them.
--Use peer support and influences on specific occasions.
--Use personal and private talks; make many positive contacts.
--Invite pupil to aid the teacher.
--Set classroom climate that is receptive to individual differences--physical, emotional, social, as well as learning.
--Set times aside where pupil can pursue independently his own interest.
--Use bibliotherapy; group therapy; selected readings to help with problems.
--Make special comment to pupil after returning from absence.
--Give special magazines, notes, other materials to pupil(s).
--Point out to pupil his unique contributions to class.
--Provide pupil opportunity to perform (music, drama, hobby) before class.
--Invite pupil to listen in when reporting positive performance to parents.
--Use tape playbacks to demonstrate pupil's progress.
--Have pupils "chart" their progress (help pupil set reasonable goals).
--Have lunch with pupil in school cafeteria.
--Communicate with child while he is doing well rather than zeroing in on a child when doing badly.

Creative teachers will come up with scores of other ideas.

III. Tentative Finding of Needs Project Based on Preliminary Data

A. Regarding Intervention Procedures

1. The simple checklist developed by teachers seems highly effective for identifying educationally significant problems.

2. Approximately 2/3 of the pupils having problems to an unusual degree can be expected to show some improvement.

3. More problems were identified in boys than girls.

4. There was a close relationship between a student's self-perception of his self-esteem and teacher's perception of that student's self-esteem.

5. Studies carried out in an educational frame of reference may generate a different "problem profile" than yielded by the conventional mental health frame of reference.

6. Teachers identify more problems of a social nature than those of an academic nature.

7. First and last children in a sibling group tend to be more problem prone than others.

8. The importance of peer resources in correcting difficulties increases with age of child.

9. Chronic problems of relatively long standing are likely to require assistance outside the classroom for correction.

10. Teachers express high degree of satisfaction with approach. They feel that they are working on their own problems. (Note: Goodlad's findings regarding schools seldom work on teacher's felt need)

B. Regarding Needs of Highest Frequency

Needs identified in the schools having the highest frequency were:

1. Low self-concept
2. Poor work and study habits
3. Lonely
4. Needs constant supervision
5. Underachieving
6. Difficult to motivate
7. Retarded in reading

C. Pupils seldom were identified as having only one problem.

Certain problems tended to cluster together.

Examples of selected problems which had high relationship with others:

PROBLEM	OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS (correlations near .80)	
1. Low self concept	lonely	negative in attitude
	rejected by peers	harbors self-pity
	suspicious of help	withdrawn

PROBLEM	OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS (correlations near .80)
2. Poor work habits	makes little effort to succeed difficult to motivate needs continuous supervision underachieving too low level of aspiration
3. Rejected by peers	lonely harbors self-pity muscle coordination low self concept weight
4. Withdrawn	lonely chronic medical problems rejected by peers low self concept unhappy in school

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